

I wake up first, and I stare at you sleeping by caesarjoestar

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Summary:

Time stops. *Richie Tozier's life stops.* Time doesn't even feel real, nothing does. The whole world is spiraling so fast and violently but Richie is sitting there, still and unmoving. He doesn't move or think, he just feels. The realisation of those finally hitting him seeping into him, right down to the very core of his being and filling him with emotions he had never felt before, let alone could even name. *What the actual fuck. No, that can't be right. I saw them this morning,* he thought.

Or, the day Richie's parents die and he's shipped off to Hawkins, Indiana to meet his until now completely unknown twin brother, Mike Wheeler.

1. time stops;

Author's Note:

series title from evelyn evelyn by evelyn evelyn

9th of February 1984, was a normal a day in Derry, Maine (not that anything much ever happened there). The air was chilled, in a way where the cold sank into your bones but that was normal for a February morning.

Richie Tozier left his bed and immediately got dressed, not wanting the cold to touch him for any longer then it could, packs his bag for school, runs down the stairs and makes himself some toast before he goes to school. His parents are there, both of them rushing to get ready for work. They both work as real estate agents together so they're leaving together today to show off a house for their new clients. Just before leaving, Maggie Tozier had kissed her only son on top of his head telling him, 'The house we're showing is pretty far away, so we're probably going to be back late tonight. There's leftovers in the fridge that you just need to heat up. I'll see you later, love you.' She ruffled his hair and walked out the door shutting behind her, with Richie calling out, 'I love you too', behind her.

Once he was finished with his breakfast, Richie sat in his father's chair in the front room, pulled out a cigarette and smoked it while idly watching some TV show he wasn't particularly invested in. Smoking was a habit he picked up with Beverly after the 'incident' that happened the year before, at first he used it to calm his nerves but now it was like a reflex, he did it without even realising he was doing it.

After he stubbed his cigarette out, Richie left the house and biked his way to school. Meeting Ben at the gate and excitedly chatting with

him about the latest X-Men comic and who would win between Wolverine vs Cyclops (Richie was sure it would be Wolverine.) They got to the lockers and found the other members of The Losers Club (minus Beverly and Mike) huddled around Bill's locker talking amongst themselves. It wasn't about anything particularly interesting, just that Clive Cox and Melissa Hall had broken up but to the group of pre-teens, it was the most interesting thing they'd heard all week.

"I'm just saying I'm not surprised they broke up, Melissa looks like a horse with ugly lipstick," Richie added to the conversation.

"Like you can talk." Replied Eddie, punching him in the arm.

"Ow! I'll have you know I only wear the prettiest lipstick, Eds." This only caused him to get another punch in his other arm by Stan.

Wanting his friends to stop punching each other, Ben changed the subject. "What do we have first period?"

"Muh-math," Bill responded.

Eddie groaned in disgust at that. Richie however, kind of enjoyed maths, he was pretty good at it too.

"Don't worry Eds, I can help you with the homework tonight after I finish up with your mum, she's quite a demanding women." He said with a wink, to which he received an even harder punch in the arm and a 'Beep beep Richie,' from Eddie and Bill.

Once the bell rang and they all went off for class the day went on normally, Richie only getting in trouble once for speaking during English class. That was until halfway through the third period when the headmaster entered the class with an incredibly serious look on his face. Somehow Richie instinctively knew he was there for him.

“Richard Tozier,” The man called out, “I need you to come with me to my office.”

From the look on the man’s face, he could tell that he wasn’t in trouble it was something *much* worse than that. His stomach dropped.

He followed the man to his office and once he entered he saw that there were two police officers in there waiting for him. *Oh God, oh fuck, oh God no* . The headmaster instructed him to sit on the old, worn down, yellow couch in the back corner of his office and the two police officers pulled the chairs away from the desk and placed them in front of Richie.

“Now son what we have to tell you isn't easy,” The first officer started, “Your parents got into a car accident on the way to New Hampshire today, and I’m sorry to say but they both passed away at the scene.”

Time stops. *Richie Tozier’s life stops*. Time doesn’t even feel real, nothing does. The whole world is spiraling so fast and violently but Richie is sitting there, still and unmoving. He doesn’t move or think,

he just feels. The realisation of those finally hitting him seeping into him, right down to the very core of his being and filling him with emotions he had never felt before, let alone could even name. *What the actual fuck. No, that can't be right. I saw them this morning*, he thought.

“Do you have anything you want to ask us?” The second officer asked and for once in his life, Richie Tozier didn’t know what to say.

After a few moments of Richie sitting stock still, staring down at his lap without saying or doing anything the first officer spoke up again, “Son?”

Richie’s head snapped up, “Yeah?” He replied almost too quickly.

“Do you have any family you can stay with for now?”

Richie really had to rack his brain for the answer, his grandparents on both of his parent's sides had died and his father had been an only child. Suddenly, he remembered his mother had a sister who lived in Indiana (although he was sure he’d never even met the woman or knew anything about her.)

“I have an aunt in Indiana.” He answered.

“Okay, well, we can contact her when we get back to the station. Do you have any family in Derry or nearby?”

“No.”

“Anyone at all you can stay with?” The officer asked.

He could only think of one family. “Yeah, the Uris’, I’m sure they’ll let me stay with them for a bit.”

“We can contact them if you stay here.” The two officers said as they exited the room.

The headmaster walked over to him crouched down to meet his eye level, “I can call Stanley out of class for you if you like,” he said giving him a sympathetic smile.

Richie nodded, and then added, “Can you get my other friends too?” *It would be easier to tell them all at once* , he figured.

“Okay.” He told the young boy and Richie gave him the names of his friends.

The headmaster must have told the boys before they entered the office because they looked equally as devastated (and in Ben’s case openly crying) for their friend. Ben all but tackled him into a hug, which Richie gladly accepted. Once Ben finally lets go of his friend,

Eddie immediately takes his place. A hug from Ben had been expected, Ben Hanscom was an affectionate person, but Eddie? Richie couldn't even think back to a time where Eddie had hugged him before (although he did remember that he hugged Bill when Georgie went missing.) He held onto his friend for what was longer then what was probably socially acceptable but neither of them cared, Richie needed this. After Eddie, Bill took his place and gave him a hug full of so much sympathy and understand, Richie thought he might lose it then and there. As much as all of the losers felt for Richie, Bill was the only one who really understood it, having lost someone so close to him too he understood Richie only too well for what such a young boy should. Lastly and hesitantly Stan hugged Richie too, much like Eddie he wasn't particularly affectionate. With Eddie, he was more worried about touching someone and contracting some kind of illness whereas with Stan it was because he was an awkward and anxious boy. He didn't really know how to give or receive comfort but he was trying for his friend.

The boys continuously talked to him, giving him condolences and comforting words but Richie found that he didn't want them, he just wanted silence.

"Could you guys just- could you stop talking? Please?" He questioned in an uncharacteristically meek voice. The rest of the boys immediately shut up and stood staring at him awkwardly. Richie sighed and patted the seats next to him to which all four of the other losers sat with him. Silently, Richie leant his head onto Bill's shoulder and Ben took his hand on the opposite side of him. They stayed this way until both the officers and the headmaster entered the room again, telling him that the Uris' had allowed Richie to stay with them until a more permanent placement. Stan's parents showed up at the school around ten minutes later to pick him and their son up, (the rest of the boys being told to go back to class) each of them giving Richie a tearful, parting hug before he left with Stan and his parents.

The car ride to the Uris residence was full of awkward questions that Richie really didn't feel like answering and almost patronising condolences. He didn't hold it against them though- he knew that they were genuinely trying to help (even if it didn't work at all.)

Once at the house, Mrs. Uris asked the boys if they wanted any food but Richie was sure if even a single piece of food touched his lips he'd vomit, so instead, he followed Stan up to his bedroom. Richie toed off his shoes at the door and sat on edge of Stan's bed, idly watching the other boy prepare his bed at the foot of Stan bed. He didn't even realise he was staring until Stan called his name and he realised that Stan had finished making up his bed for some time now.

"Richie?"

He felt something bubble up inside of him, a want to feel normal. "What can I do ya' for guvna?" He joked in his terrible British accent but after seeing Stan's frankly worried face at the joke he sighed and lied down with his legs hanging off the edge of the bed.

Stan stayed where he was seated on Richie's bed. "Are you okay?"

Turning his face to look at his friend, "I didn't know Stanley Uris made jokes now." He questioned, slightly irritated.

Stan huffed out a sigh and rolled his eyes but also gave Richie a quiet, "Sorry."

Richie didn't reply, he instead turned his head to stare up at the ceiling. After a few minutes, he felt the bed dip and Stanley lied down on the opposite side of the bed so their heads met in the middle. Neither of the boys knew how long they stayed like that, the silence around them thick but not uncomfortable, but it must have been hours because once Mrs. Uris called them down for dinner the sun had begun setting, casting the boys in deep orange and yellow light.

Dinner went about as well as it could of when you've only just found out that both your parents have died. Unlike with Richie and Stan the dinner table was filled with an incredibly uncomfortable silence which was only sometimes filled with Mr. and Mrs. Uris' inane small talk to each other about literally anything other than the big fat elephant in the room named Richie Tozier.

Richie hardly ate any of his dinner and instead decided that pushing his food around his plate, only taking bites when one of the Uris parents were looking at him. Thankfully, Stan managed to cut the awkward dinner short by telling his parents a lie about homework the boys need to get started on and excused himself and Richie from the table.

Before they could reach the solace of Stanley's room the phone rang and Mr. Uris asked Stan to answer it. He answered the phone in an irritated tone, *honestly, couldn't people tell he was trying to comfort his best friend over the death of his parents and not call for a single day?* That was until he heard it was Bill's voice coming out from over the phone.

“Stan? Is Richie there, could you put him on?” Bill asked and Stan handed the phone over to his friend with a whisper of ‘It’s Bill’ and ‘It’s for you.’

“Hey,” Richie answered in what he had hoped sounded like a chipper, laid-back voice but really sounded strangled and awkward.

“Hey,” Bill answered softly, “We were juh-juh-just wondering if you wa-want us to tell Mike and B-b-beverly for you.”

He really had to mull the question over in his head until he answered back, “When are you guys next seeing Mike?”

“Tomo-morrow after school.” He responded.

“Okay, could you tell Mike tomorrow and I’ll Bev myself later.”

“Okay,” Bill replied in his soft voice again, “Good-nuh-night, Richie.”

A small smile played at his lips, “Night, Billiam.”

Once back in Stan’s room, Richie found himself bone-tired and Stan began to lay out some spare pyjamas for the other boy to wear on his bed. The boys turned away from each other, getting changed and

then slipping into their respective beds, despite it only being around 7 pm both of the boys felt completely exhausted from the day's awful events.

"Goodnight," Stanley called out into the dark void of his bedroom.

"Night," Richie called back.

After what had felt like an eternity of fidgeting and squirming around in his bed Richie decided to give up and sat up in his bed just to see that the digital clock on Stanley's bedside drawers read 8 pm. *Great, so it's only been two whole fucking hours*, he thought to himself angrily.

The covers on Stan's bed shifted ever so slightly and then he slowly began to sit up.

"Can't sleep too?" Stan questioned in a whisper.

"Yeah," Richie answered and both the boys became quiet again for a few moments before Richie spoke again, "Remember when we younger and when we had sleepovers we'd sleep in the same bed?"

Stanley nodded, "You use to kick me all the time."

Richie let out a small chuckle at that, “You use to steal all the covers, what did you expect me to do?”

Even though he couldn't clearly see Stan's face in the dark he was sure the other boy was rolling his eyes. The room fell into silence again, with the two boys staring at each other until Stan shuffled over to the left side of his bed flipped the covers up on the right side over. A silent invitation for Richie to let him feel like they were little kids again, back before they fought a child-eating clown and the deaths of the people closest to them. Without a word, Richie left his own bed and joined Stanley in his. He rolled over to stare at the wall and Stan did the same.

They shared no words between them until Richie finally breathed out a quiet, “Thanks,” and then fell into a deep, restless slumber.

2. Hey Mummy, It's Richie

Notes for the Chapter:

chapter title from thanks dad by richie woods

Richie woke up at 4 am on the dot and instinctively he knew he wouldn't be able to fall back asleep again, so for a few moments, he stared blankly at the ceiling. Watching the lines on the ceiling grow and shrink and move in strange lines, wiggling about like long, thin worms made of beige lath and plaster. He thought about everything and nothing, about his parents, where he'd live, what he'd tell Beverly, how the rest of the losers were going to tell Mike. He thought about all of this but in no words at all, more like feeling it all at once and then not feeling it at all.

He stayed like that for almost an hour and then decided to migrate back to his bed, *if his parents saw us they might think it was weird*, he thought to himself. Being careful to not wake Stan, he gently pulled back his covers and smoothed them back over his friend once he was out of the bed. He tiptoed back to his bed and slipped back under the covers only to have his mind filled with everything and nothing once again.

At 7 am Mrs. Uris came into the bedroom to wake the boys up, telling Stanley to get ready for school and that breakfast would be ready for them both in a few minutes. Richie still didn't feel any more hungry than he did the day before but he knew that it was almost coming up to an hour 24 hours since he last properly ate anything so once Stan had gotten changed he joined his friend and sat at the kitchen table with him.

Mrs. Uris smiled kindly at him, placing two pieces of toast and fried egg onto his plate and doing the same for her son and husband.

Richie grimaces at the food but ate anyway, he knew he had to. He found it hard to swallow, not because it was bad, but because every piece of food that slithered down his throat made him feel closer and closer to vomiting. However, he managed to finish his whole breakfast without even dry heaving so he counted that as a win.

Once it turned 7:45 am Stanley gave him a sad smile and left for school with a soft, 'Bye Richie, bye mum, bye dad.' and small, meek wave. Without his friend there anymore Richie felt truly awkward and so did Mr. and Mrs. Uris. They made stilted, polite conversation with him to which Richie replied as equally politely as he could (even though it was making him feel like he was going to rip his hair out.)

Then Mr. Uris left for work at the temple not too long after his son left with a chaste kiss on his wife's cheek. Richie and Mrs. Uris sat awkwardly at the kitchen table until she couldn't take it anymore, suddenly standing up and telling Richie that she had many errands to run that day and asking him if he'd be okay alone for a few hours.

"Yeah, I'll be fine." Richie nodded.

She smiled at him gently. "I won't be gone too long, okay?"

"Okay."

She nodded at him once more, collected her handbag and was out the door before Richie could even say goodbye.

Richie had sat watching the TV for the past two hours, although you couldn't really call it 'watching', it was more like painstakingly waiting for the clock to turn to 10 am so he could call Beverly at what he hoped was an acceptable time for her and so he can leave and have the smoke he so clearly needed. He didn't have a key to the house so he couldn't just sit in the back garden and smoke like he wanted and Stanley just might kill him if he smoked in his bedroom, so he had to wait, and the wait was killing him.

As soon as the clock struck 10 am he jumped from where he was on the couch in the front and bounded over to the kitchen where the phone was. He knew Beverly's number off by heart so he didn't even think as he was punching it in. The ringtone was deafening to his ears but he just closed his eyes and prayed that Beverly would pick up.

Maybe there was a God because she did just that and Richie's whole body was filled with relief as he heard her voice instead of her aunts, "Hello?"

"Well, hiya Molly Ringwald." Richie joked, slipping back into his lighthearted persona so easily.

"Rich? Why the hell are you calling me so early?" She questioned, sleep and irritation heavy in her voice.

He was silent for a moment. Over the short time, the pair had become friends they had made an unbreakable bond. They were best friends, and even more than that, not in a romantic or sexual way but in a way neither had ever experienced before or even knew words for. They had felt part of their souls filled when they had become friends like they were waiting to meet each other their whole lives. He had to say it, he had to tell her himself but it felt like if he said those words out loud it would mean it was real, that it really happened, *that his parents were never coming home.*

“Richie?” She asked, her voice slowly feeling with worry.

He didn’t reply.

“Richie? Richie are you o-”

“They’re dead.” He said finally, tear welling up in his eyes, threatening to spill over.

“Who?!” She all but screamed, “Whos dead?!”

“My-my parents,” He answered in a shuddering sigh, “They got in a- in a car accident yesterday and they both died, they’re dead.”

“Oh God Richie.” Beverly breathed out.

“I don’t know where I’m gonna go. The only family I got lives in Indiana, I might have to go live with them.” He let out an unhappy laugh, “I know I always said I wanted to leave Derry but not like this.”

“Christ, Rich don’t say it like that.”

“I don’t know what I’m gonna do.” He confessed, holding his head in his hands.

"I don't- I don't either," Beverly chewed on her lip, "Whens the funeral? I'm sure I could ask my aunt if I could come and then I could see you for a few days."

Richie didn't even need anytime to mull it over in his mind, "Yeah, yeah I'd like that."

"Okay, I gotta- gotta get ready for school now Rich, I'm so fucking sorry about all this shit, you don't deserve it."

He smiled at that, "Don't go getting all sappy on me on me now, Bev."

"Yeah, yeah whatever Richie," She laughed, "I'll call you later, okay?"

"Yeah, sure, bye Bev." He hung up the phone and immediately ran up the stairs to Stan's room. He put on the clothes he wore the day before and packed his backpack back up again, making sure to fish out his pack of cigarettes and lighter. He ran back down the stairs and since he didn't have a key for the door he climbed out of one of the kitchen windows, hoping that no one would try to rob the Uris' while he was out.

He lit his cigarette, letting the smoke seep into his lungs and into every fibre of his being as he made his way back to his house.

Richie left a trail of cigarette butts all the way to his door, the chain-smoking the only reason he was keeping it all together. Once on his doorstep, he searched his backpack for his key and when he found it

he slowly and gently opened the door, letting the pale morning light seep into the untouched house through the open doorway.

He stood there just staring, unable to move. The house didn't look picture-perfect but it looked warm and lived in and it felt like home but now it felt so immeasurably empty. He could almost picture the ghosts of his parents dancing around the house like they did that one Christmas four years ago. Neither of his parents were good dancers by any means but watching his parents dance together had filled the small up with so much happiness at the time, but now he felt nothing but sorrow. He'd never get to see that again, never get to joke around with his dad again, never get to eat his mum's amazing home cooking again. This house held nothing but ghosts of his past life of the life where he had love and now he had nothing.

Richie stepped one foot into the threshold of the house, and then another, and another until he had made it all the way to the bottom of the stairs without even realising. He stood there staring up the stairs and onto the second floor where his and his parent's bedrooms resided and his stomach twisted violently and before he knew what was happening he was vomiting all over the bottom step of the staircase. He hadn't even known he felt sick until he was vomiting.

He held one hand out to steady himself on the wall and after a few moments slowly moved up the stairs and into the bathroom where he rinsed out his mouth and brushed his teeth until his gums where bleed and then kept going and going until he couldn't taste the vomit anymore, only tasting his own blood. He spat it out and watched it swirl around the sink before going into the drain, the memory of Beverly's bathroom in the back of his mind.

He pushed himself out of the bathroom and with a cursory glance at his bedroom decided against it and carried on to his parent's room instead. He dropped his backpack at the foot of the bed and kicked off his shoes, not caring where they ended up. He crawled into the

bed, under the covers and finally let it all out. He screamed and sobbed and wailed for his parents. He cried so hard his eyes, nose and throat went so sore and his head felt so heavy. He wept until sleep took him again into another restless, dreamless slumber.

“Richie? *Richie?* ” A worried voice called to him as he was shaken gently from his sleep, he immediately thought of this mother but the reality came crashing back in when he opened his eyes and was greeted with Mrs. Uris’ worried face.

He took in his surroundings and found that not only was Mrs. Uris in the room but also Mr. Uris and the two police officers who had informed him of his parent's deaths the day before. Richie gradually sat up in the bed, removing his glasses as he had forgotten to take them off before he started crying and they were now pushed uncomfortably hard into his face, leaving a red indent where they were.

“Are you okay?” Mrs. Uris asked as she pushed his hair out of his eyes. The answer was obvious, his face was red and covered in tear streaks. *Of course, I’m not okay*, he thought angrily to himself.

“I’m fine.” He lied.

“Son, we have some good news for you,” One of the cops started, “We contacted you aunt, Karen Wheeler, and she agreed to take you in.”

So that was it? I’m now officially leaving my home and friends forever because that’s what some adults said, because that’s what they think is going to be best for me?

He just nodded. "Okay."

The Uris' helped him pack some extra clothes for his stay at their house while the officers explained to him about the move to Indiana and that his aunt had offered to pay for the funeral costs for him. He just nodded solemnly along with everything the men said and then let the Uris' drive him back to theirs where the rest of The Losers Club was waiting for him.

Mike pulled him into a crushing hug as soon as he saw him, no words were shared between them but the hug filled Richie with so many emotions he thought he might break down again. Just like Richie, Mike had lost his parents too. The two boys had already formed an unbreakable bond just like with everyone else in The Losers Club but now they had something else that none of the others had, even Bill.

The losers stayed with him that night, making him laugh and playing around together to let Richie feel somewhat normal again and while he what had happened stayed lurking in the back of his mind, his friends could always help him feel better again.

Over the next few days, the losers helped him keep his mind off things and the Uris' helped him plan the funeral, Beverly managed to convince her aunt to let her come over for a few days too.

It was on one of those when he was hanging out with them, all his friends joking around with each other and Richie felt like he was drowning, he hadn't told them yet and he couldn't keep it to himself for much longer.

"I'm leaving," He said suddenly.

"What? Did we do something wrong?" Asked Eddie in a worried tone.

"No, I mean I'm leaving Derry." He sighed

"Wuh-what do you mean you're le-le-leaving Derry?" Questioned Bill.

"My aunt in Indiana said she'd take me in so I'm moving there now." He confessed, hanging his head.

"You're leaving? For real?" Mike spoke up.

Richie just sadly nodded.

Beverly pulled him into a tight hug and once she let go she smiled at him, "Copycat."

All the losers giggled and Richie lovingly rolled his eyes at her.

Two days before the funeral Richie, Stan, Beverly and Ben had been sitting in Stan's room messing around when Mr. Uris called up to Richie that he had a phone call. He gave a confused look to his friends and left the room telling them he'd be back soon. Once at the kitchen Mr. Uris wordlessly handed him the phone and Richie took it, holding the receiver up to his ear.

“Hello?” He asked the unknown person.

“Hello, is this Richard?” The voice, a female voice, on the other side of the phone asked.

“Richie,” He corrected, “Who is this?”

“Oh Richie honey, this is Karen Wheeler.” She told him.

“Oh, um, hi Mrs. Wheeler.” Richie really wasn’t sure how to talk to the women.

“You don’t have to call me that, just call me- *nevermind* , I just called to tell you that I’ll be coming to the funeral,” She paused, “And then afterward I’ll be driving you back to mine.”

So, he only had two left? Two whole fucking days to get used to maybe never getting to see any of his friends again? Fan-fucking-tastic.

“Um, right...”

“Oh sweetheart, I wish I would've gotten to see you under better circumstances. Last time I saw you was when you were born.” She confessed to him.

“You were there?” He questioned her, his mother had never mentioned that her sister had been present at his birth.

“Of course I was! Did Maggie ever tell you? I mean, you do know

about it, right?”

“Know about what?” Richie responded.

“About-” She paused again, “Actually I think it would be better if I told you in person.”

“Uh, okay?” Richie Tozier was a naturally curious person and now this had piqued his interest. He knew he wouldn’t be able to stop thinking about this for days, great.

“It was good talking to you, sweetheart. See you soon, Richie.” She told him wearily (it honestly sounded like she was close to tears.)

“You-you too, bye.” He told her before hanging up. His mind was spinning, two days was all he had left.

The day before the funeral The Losers Club helped him pack all his stuff away, which made Richie realise he had a surprisingly small amount of items to take with him. He only filled one suitcase and his backpack up.

Not long left now.

Funeral came all too fast and not fast enough. The Uris’ drove him, Stan and Eddie to the church with Richie whispering ‘bet this is the first time you’ve been to a church, right?’ into Stan’s ear which only

caused him to get a punch in his arm. These little jokes like these made him temporarily forget where they were going to if he thought hard he could convince himself that the reason they were all wearing suits was because they were going to some fancy party. Maybe Richie had won some kind of award for his stand-up comedy or Bill had one book of the year for his newest novel. If he could choose to live in his fantasies forever, Richie was sure he would.

They pulled up outside the church and Richie was faced with a large group of adults all wanting to talk to him and tell him how sorry they were. He could tell though, they didn't really care. Maybe they did think it was sad, a child so young losing both their parents but they didn't *actually care*. Richie decided to grin and bear it, politely shaking their hands and thanking them for coming. *He hated it.*

At least it started to get better when the rest of his friends started to turn up and he had an excuse not to talk to the adults. Richie stayed with his friends until he saw the last car pull in, he didn't recognise the car or the person until they stepped out, but when they did his heart lurched in his chest. The women looked so much like his late mother it hurt him. Her hair, face and aura just oozed Maggie Tozier, and if Richie was honest it made him feel a little ill.

She made a beeline for him and Richie guessed she must have recognised him in the same way too. Her face looked genuinely upset but there was also a mix of something else Richie couldn't really place.

The losers parted like the red sea when they saw her coming, letting her get close to Richie.

She gave him a sad smile, "Hi, sweetie."

"Hi," He replied back, in a slightly strangled tone.

She stepped forward again and pulled the young boy into a gentle hug, he could feel her shake in his arms (although Richie wasn't exactly sure if that was actually him.)

"I wish we could of met properly under different circumstances," Karen told him again while she absentmindedly began pushing his hair out of his face smoothing it down.

Richie nodded, unsure of what to say but luckily he was saved by the vicar calling everyone into the church.

They all filed into the church, quiet whispering and murmuring surrounding them as the melancholy tune of *River Man* by Nick Drake (it had been one of his father's favourite songs) played through the air on the church's old boombox but Richie choose to ignore it and instead focused exclusively on his seat on the front set of pews. He sat with Karen on left and then Beverly and Bill on his right, with the other losers and their parents sitting behind them. His parent's coffins had not been brought in by pall-bearers since Maggie and Wentworth had no living family who would be able to carry the coffins and having only friends carry them would have felt wrong, the church staff had instead brought the couple in before the funeral began. The other people sorted themselves into the opposite set of pews on the right.

Once everyone was seated the vicar began his service, first by leading the congregation in singing Abide With Me.

"Abide with me, all things bright and beautiful. Amazing grace, be still for the presence of the Lord. Dear Lord and Father, for the beauty of the earth, great is thy faithfulness. The Lord is my shepherd, Jerusalem. Lead us heavenly Father lead us, Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of the dance. Love divine all loves excelling, make

me a channel of your peace. Old rugged cross, the day thou gavest, the King of love my shepherd is.”

They were seated by the vicar, but after only a single hymn Richie couldn't handle it. His head was spiralling and he felt ill again, so ill he was sure he was going to vomit and vomit and vomit until his organs came tumbling out too, but just as he was about to lose it all he felt a soft hand unclasp the fist he hadn't even realised he had clenched. Beverly delicately pushed his fingers apart, pressing her own gentle fingers against his palm, where he had clenched so tight his nails had begun to dig into his skin and then interlocked them together. She was his only tether between this world and the all-encompassing despair he felt clawing at his soul. He could almost liken it to as if IT was in the same room as them again, but this time deeper. The fear of IT was for his life but this fear was for his whole being and everything that was Richie Tozier. To the onlooker it just looked like poor Richie was just trying to stop himself from crying at his own parents funeral when in reality he was battling himself inside for his soul. At this moment he couldn't have been more thankful for the day The Losers Club had decided to befriend Beverly Marsh.

He got through the rest of the funeral as fine as he could of, teetering on the edge of falling apart but his friends helped ground him. He was here in this world and he would never fall so far, for the sake of his friends he wouldn't.

Richie hadn't even been in the moment, not really, he copied everything everyone did, almost on cue but hadn't been taking it in. He hadn't realised it was over until he heard the familiar tune of *Dear Prudence by Siouxsie and the Banshees* , (Maggie hadn't been able to stop playing it for months before her death.)

“ *Dear Prudence,* ” Siouxsie Sioux's dark and mesmerizing voice sounded through the church, “ *Won't you come out to play?* ”

“ Dear Prudence, ” The song pierced through Richie’s heart, *“ Greet the brand new day. ”*

“ The sun is up, the sky is blue, ” He couldn’t deal with this for much longer.

“ It’s beautiful and so are you, ” Gripping Beverly and Bill’s hands he all but dragged his two friends out of their seats.

“ Dear Prudence, ” He ran as fast as could out of there, dragging his friends along with him and past the slow-moving adults making their way slowly to the door, *“ Won’t you come out and play? ”*

Once out the door and into the church courtyard he immediately let go of his friend’s hands but of course, the barrage of questions came from the other losers who were quick to follow them when they saw Richie’s mad dash for the exit. He was hardly listening to his friends until a new voice cut through their pre-pubescent shrieking.

“Richie honey, are you okay? What happened?” He hadn’t even realised that Karen Wheeler had followed them, but of course, she had.

“I’m- I’m fine...” He told her, not wanting to get into every single emotion he had felt in there but he was also sure that even if he had wanted to he wouldn’t have had the words to describe it properly.

She nodded slowly, obviously not believing him but deciding it was just better to drop for now. It seemed that at that moment God smiled down at him because his next-door neighbour, Mrs. Bailey, decided to strike up a conversation with Karen. She stepped away begrudgingly

from the group of friends and Richie turned back to his friends to weakly smile at them.

“Are yo-you okay?” Bill question in a concerned tone.

“Yeah fine,” He answered too quickly, “Just needed to get out.”

The rest of the losers nodded at him and after a few moments Ben’s face lit up. He reached into his bag and pulled out a book, placing it in Richie’s hands.

“We wanted to make something before you left to remember us by,” Ben told him, blushing slightly. Richie glanced down at the heavy book in his hands, it had ‘The Losers Club’ handwritten on the top of the cover and ‘For Richie ‘Trashmouth’ Tozier’ on the bottom. He flipped open the book and the first page revealed a message saying ‘So you don’t forget us. From Bill, Stanley, Eddie, Beverly, Ben and Mike’ on bright yellow paper with little doodles of stars littered across the page. The next few pages were pictures of Richie and Stan as kids, they had been friends since they were so young they couldn’t remember not being friends, and slowly throughout the first few pages, they grew up together until they turned nine and suddenly the pictures were now included Bill and Eddie. Pictures of Bill’s tenth birthday party (which also included Georgie), Stan looking downright moody with a large bird book open in his lap and Eddie mid-scream as Richie threw a half-eaten sandwich at him. It went on like this for a while until they reached a picture of Beverly and Ben laughing together that Mike had secretly taken on his Polaroid camera taken the day after the rock war. After that, the pictures heavily featured all seven of the losers, up until they reached Beverly’s going away party and then she suddenly disappeared from the pictures. The rest of the book featured polaroids of the now six losers around Derry, although once he reached the last six pages of the book the pictures ended and turned into personal letters from each of the losers to Richie. Not that Richie would let anyone know but he could feel the tears welling up in his eyes that were so close to falling.

“He’s just being humble, it was mostly Ben, Mike, Bill and Eddie who made the scrapbook,” Beverly told him, but he could tell she also had a big involvement in the book judging by the huge smile across her face.

“God you guys are all so sappy, I don’t know how you’re gonna’ survive without me here to make sure you don’t all turn into sobbing messes,” Richie said, as a massive grin crossed his face and he cradled the book against his chest.

Eddie rolled his eyes and without any force behind it, punched Richie in the arm. “*Shut up,*” He told him lightheartedly with a soft smile gracing his lips.

The wake was held at the Uris’ house and then that night Richie and the rest of The Losers Club had a goodbye party for Richie (and Beverly again) at Bill’s house. Early the next morning they all tearfully said goodbye to Richie as he packed his luggage away into Karen’s car.

It hurt so much to say goodbye, although he knew it wasn’t forever and that he could call his friends whenever he wanted it was going to be so different without them. He couldn’t just turn up at Bill or Stan’s house whenever he wanted, he couldn’t go pet the sheep on Mike’s farm, listen to crappy pop music while reading comics in Ben’s bedroom, smoke cigarettes behind the school gym with Beverly or get ice cream with Eddie and argue over which flavour was better. It was going to be different, and he wasn’t going to like it.

He hugged all his friends (and Mr. and Mrs. Uris) goodbye (but not before Beverly slipped a fifty pack of cigarettes into his backpack

with a wink), clambered into the passenger seat of Karen's car and thus the eighteen hour trip to Hawkins started.

The first day of the ride was uneventful at best, with Karen trying her best to make small talk with Richie and trying to get to know him more. Richie didn't dislike her for it, he understood why she was doing it, but he honestly wasn't in the mood for it. He didn't like talking to any adults anyway. Since the drive took so long they decided to stay the night in New York and Richie thought that might of been the best part of the whole move, he'd never been that far out of Maine before, but Richie had always dreamed of going to a big city. It felt freeing to be somewhere where everyone around didn't know who you were, would never know and didn't care to know. It was so different than a tiny, little, backwater town like Derry.

One the second day, however, Karen was quiet. They mostly sat in silence, listening to Karen's multiple Fleetwood Mac tapes on repeat. Everyone once in a while Richie would catch her looking at him like she wanted to tell him something but ultimately deciding not to, it was then that Richie thought back to their conversation on the phone. *' Did Maggie ever tell you? I mean, you do know about it, right? '*

Somewhere near the state line between Ohio and Indiana did Karen look over to him, determination in her eyes. "Did she tell you?"

"About what?" Richie asked, his heart beating faster in his chest.

"About-" Her eyes went back to the road, "About who I really am to you?"

"What do you mean? You're my aunt." He told her as confusion sank into his chest.

Karen was silent for a moment then looked back at him and then looked back at the road again.

“It’s true that me and Maggie are sisters, but Maggie found out she was infertile. At around the same time I found out I was pregnant with twins and since having a child was what her and Wentworth wanted most in the world I gave you to her. What I’m- what I’m saying is that Richie honey, I’m your *real* mother.”

Richie just gaped at her open-mouthed like a fish, eyes wide and stomach in knots, unable to say anything.

“And my son, Michael, he’s your twin,” She continued, “You two are identical actually.”

“ *What the fuck?* ”

Notes for the Chapter:

wassup by bebos?

ok so tbh i based richies grieving process on my own when i lost my granddad and i did actually vomit the day after he died (mostly bc i didnt sleep and or eat or a while)

ik that nick drake only really started to get fans after he died in 1974 so idk if he was that well known in 1984 but like i feel like river man (and a lot of his songs) would be really good funeral music u kno?? and also like idk how well known siouxie and the banshees were in america in the 80s but their cover of dear prudence came out in 1983 so like i can have it in my fic lmao

this chapter was also a massive bitch to edit bc for some god damn reason grammarly REFUSED to save any of my corrections and im very dyslexic so i need it like i had 100+ spelling/grammar mistakes in this and i corrected the whole way through once and it didnt save and i got so angry i had to sleep to calm down (i actually finished the chapter last night but didnt post it at the time bc of this)

anyway hope grammarly can get its shit together in time for the next chapter, oh and next chap is gonna be from mike (wheelers) pov so theres that to look forward to

thank u for reading! <3

3. I Wanna go Back Before I Knew Anything About the World, or Anything About You

Notes for the Chapter:

chapter title from little kid by dogbite

It had been just a normal, cold Thursday afternoon. There hadn't been AV club that day and while the rest of his friends wanted to go to the arcade after school Mike had decided he needed some alone time. Not that he got much alone time with four other people in the house but he could at least trap himself in his room for a few hours of much-needed solitude.

His thoughts of privacy were destroyed the moment he stepped through the door and hear the unmistakable sounds of his mother sobbing. As much as he didn't often get on with her, he had to see what had happened. He ran to the kitchen where he could hear his mother wailing from, and was greeted with the sight of her curled up on the kitchen floor, phone held so tightly her fingers were going white.

"Mum, what happened?" He asked her in a worried tone.

"My- my sister, she died..." She choked out in between sobs.

Mike himself had never met his aunt, but he knew that she lived in Maine so it was too far away for them to travel to. He sunk to his knees awkwardly on the linoleum kitchen floor and held his mother's hands.

"Her husband too," She told him, "They-they were in a car crash-they both died, *God*." Karen pushed her face into Mike's shoulder and he held her until she stopped crying.

Once Ted came home Karen gave her son a sad smile and asked him to 'go play upstairs' while she talked to his father. Mike didn't say anything and instead just nodded and quietly made his way to his room.

A few hours later, once Nancy was home and when Ted and Karen had finished their discussion they asked their children to join them in the living room for a talk.

Nancy had no idea about what had happened since she had been studying with Steve until she had come back home, so she entered the room with an eye roll and a, "I have homework to do-" Although those words died on her lips as she saw the tear-stained cheeks of her mother and the obsessive chainsmoking of her father. Mike, however for his part entered the room without a sound and quietly planted himself onto the couch opposite where his parents were sitting. Nancy joined her brother, with her hands folded in her lap and head downcast.

"We have something to tell you, kids," Ted started, "Your mother is very upset today, you see her sister, Maggie, and her husband were in a car crash. They died."

Nancy's mouth went agape, "Oh Mum, I'm so sorry."

"Well, Maggie and Wentworth have a son, Richard, who luckily wasn't in the car at the time so he's still alive. Richard doesn't have any other family but us so, your mother and I have decided that we are going to take him in." He told his children, rather matter of factly.

"There is-" Karen spoke up before Mike and Nancy had a chance to anything, "There is something else I think you two should know."

Ted gave his wife an incredulous look to which she, in turn, told him, "They'll find out once he gets here, and they deserve to know!"

To that Ted just huffed out a sigh and let his wife continue.

"In 1970 Maggie found out she couldn't have babies, it was so devastated by it. Her whole life she had always wanted to be a mother, and even more so when I had Nancy," She turned to look at Nancy at that moment, nostalgia in her eyes, "She loved you *so much*, Nancy. She so enamored with you Nance, almost as much as I was. So, when she found out she was infertile it crushed her, but at the same time I found out I was pregnant," She turned to look at Mike, "*With twins*. I decided to give her one of my twins so she could have what she always wanted, so Michael honey, Richard is your twin brother."

Neither Mike nor Nancy had any idea how to respond to that bombshell at all, it was one thing to be told your cousin would be living you after his parents tragically passed away, it was another thing to be told her was actually your long lost twin brother.

Mike felt this deep, deep rage building inside him, coming from the very core of his being and passing through him until it began boiling through his veins. He clamped his hands in tight fists and shook where he sat on the edge of the sofa, but to his surprise, it was Nancy who spoke first.

"*What the hell?!*" She seethed through her teeth, "How could you do that? How could you never tell us something like that?"

Karen opened her mouth to speak but Ted beat her to it, "We didn't want to upset the both of you." He told her in his flat, monotone

voice.

“*Upset us*’, well I’m not upset, *I’m angry*, so Goddamn angry.” Mike spat at his parents.

“Michael, Nancy- you have to believe us, we wanted to tell you, *we really did*, but we couldn’t-”

“*Really?* Is that all you have to say for yourselves? You wanted to tell us, then why didn’t you!” Nancy shouted.

Holly began to cry from all the shouting. “Oh look what you’ve done now, Nancy,” Ted told his daughter.

“Wow, I can’t believe you two!” Nancy said, awestruck with her father’s own stupidity as she stormed off to her room.

“Nancy-” Karen called weakly to her daughter before giving up and turning her attention to Mike.

“God I can’t believe you did that. You- you abandoned him, you just gave him to someone else. And that could have been me, you of easily just given me to them instead.” He remarked, enraged.

“We didn’t abandon him, we just- I just wanted to give my sister what she always wanted,” Karen said, her voice wavering.

“Then- then why not live in the lie? Because frankly, you two seem to love living in lies. Why not just never tell us, just let us believe our out of state cousin is coming to live here.”

Karen looked at her husband and then back to her son. "Because you're identical."

Oh.

The rest of Mike's week was spent in being moody at school, being moody during his DnD games and being moody in his bedroom. His friends had definitely noticed and had tried to ask him about it but Mike, being as stubborn as he is, refused to talk to them about his feelings.

The week pasted by faster then he thought it would of and without knowing it the day his mother was setting off for Derry had come. He watched her pack her suitcase into the trunk of her car and drive off, knowing that the next time he saw her she'd have his twin brother with her.

He trudged back into the house and up into his bedroom, with his father calling up to him to make up the top bunk of his bunk for Richard. Mike, begrudgingly did just that and then crawled under the covers of his own bed and fell into an early, restless sleep.

Notes for the Chapter:

sorry this chapter is so short but i got really ill while writing this (like vomiting everywhere and on everything kind of ill) and if uve every tried to be creative whilst being ill ull know its incredibly hard. anyway, next chapter should be longer but i just wanted to post this lil chap before then

4. Following the Footsteps of a Rag Doll Dance

Notes for the Chapter:

chapter title from spellbound by siouxie and the banshees

“It’s true that me and Maggie are sisters, but Maggie found out she was infertile. At around the same time I found out I was pregnant with twins and since having a child was what her and Wentworth wanted most in the world I gave you to her. What I’m- what I’m saying is that Richie honey, I’m your real mother.”

Richie just gaped at her open-mouthed like a fish, eyes wide and stomach in knots, unable to say anything.

“And my son, Michael, he’s your twin,” She continued, “You two are identical actually.”

“What the fuck?”

Richie stared wide-eyed and open-mouthed at his aunt, no, mother- the words hardly registered in his brain because they were so insane and crazy there was no way it could be true.

“Language!”

Usually would have given anyone who told him to stop swearing a snappy, snide comment but at that moment he couldn't even begin to start thinking of one. He just continued to stare at her, gaping like a fish.

After a long while of not speaking, Richie finally found his voice again, “I- *what?*”

“I know it's a little strange but please hear me out, sweetheart-”

“*Strange?*” Richie questioned, unable to hold in his feelings any longer, “This isn't just strange, this is insane, *this is insane!*”

“I know, I know, it's a lot to handle but, Richie please-”

“Oh yeah, it's a lot, *Karen*. It's only learning that my whole life up until this point was a lie.” He pushed his hands underneath his glasses and rubbed at his eyes so hard he saw white spots.

Karen, for her part, looks exhausted and on the verge of tears when Richie finally pulls his hands away and lets his eyes adjust to the light again. They don't talk for the rest of the car journey.

The rest of the drive to Hawkins is awkward, to say the least, the pair pulls up in front of the Wheeler house at around midday. It's the perfect time really, all the children are at school and the adults are

either at work or in town running whatever errands they have to run. The cul-de-sac is completely empty when they roll up.

Karen jumps up from her seat almost immediately, going to unpack their suitcases from the trunk but Richie stays sitting in his seat for a few moments. Any other time he would have been the first one flying out of his seat, he could never really ever sit still for long. Today, however, was different. He sat staring blankly at this house, his new home. It didn't feel like home. It was too big and fancy. His nose crinkled like he could smell the lies and unhappiness masked by tight-lipped smiles and expensive cars. As he gazed at the house he saw a girl looking at him from behind the front room window curtain. She was pretty, obviously so, she had mid-length brown hair, wearing a grey turtleneck jumper and had a distant look in her eyes. They caught each other's eyes for a moment, staring deeply at each other, sending unspoken words to one another. Richie could feel his hair lurch in his chest, it was the same feeling he got when he first met Karen. This girl, his older sister Nancy he guessed, was obviously related to him since there she was in the Wheeler's window but even without that he was sure if he had just bumped into her on the street he would have known within that very second that they were related.

He was broken out of his trance as Karen opened his passenger side door, "Come on, let's get inside it's so cold out here."

Richie nodded at her, unbuckling his seatbelt and scrambling to reach for his backpack he that he had thrown into the backseat of the car. Once he turned back to face the house, the girl was gone.

Retrieving his suitcase from his mother and followed her up the path to the door. Karen unlocked it and he was greeted with the sight of a middle-aged man (who he guessed was his father) holding a toddler and the same girl from the window in the foyer of the house.

He knew from the outside of the house that the Wheeler's were rich, *hell they lived in a freaking cul-de-sac*, but the inside of the house made

it so much worse. From only the small part of the house, he could see it was pristine and well kept. Smiling, perfect looking pictures lined the walls and the sweater his father was wearing alone looked like it was more expensive than Richie had ever owned. Nothing was out of place, apart from Richie himself. Where he had left before hadn't been awful or anything, it was just he had never been somewhere this nice (except Ben's house maybe.) He was used to peeling wallpaper and dirty clothes littering the staircase, not this picture perfect projection of fake perfection. He unconsciously pulled on the old, worn Hawaiian shirt he was wearing, wanting to shirk into a ball so small that he might disappear altogether.

Ted shifted the toddler in his hands and stuck out his now free left hand to Richie for him to shake. "Nice to meet you, Richard." He said in a strangely monotone voice.

"Richie-" He corrected, "Uh, nice to meet you too?" He said awkwardly. 'Nice to meet you', *is that really what you say to your son you're meeting for the first time in almost thirteen years?*

The girl beside him sighed and gently pushed her father out of the way to greet her new brother. "Hi, I'm Nancy," She said with a sympathetic smile.

"I know, and I'm Richie," He told her, showing her his trademark goofy grin.

"*I know,*" She said right back with her own grin.

Their little bit of silliness was stopped however when a new set of feet could be heard stomping down the staircase. Immediately, Richie looked up. This was the moment he had been preparing himself for as soon as he had been given the shocking news, he was going to meet his twin brother. *And good God did Michael Wheeler did not disappoint.* He watched the boy's body slowly come into view from feet to the

legs to the torso and to finally his head. Once Mike was halfway down the stairs and into view of Richie he stopped and stood there unmoving. Staring down at Richie with the same look that Richie was given him, perfectly mirrored on their identical faces. Mike looked exactly like Richie (although that could be expected) except he was wearing the same expensive looking clothes as the rest of his family and sans the thick coke-bottle style Richie wore. They were the same, and it was incredibly freaky for both boys.

"Holy shit," They both said in unison.

"Language," Ted tells them both in his perpetually tired sounding voice but neither of the boys were listening to him at all. They just stare up at each other, unblinking. That is until Mike finally makes his way down the last few steps to meet his brother, stopping at the foot of the stairs, a few metres away from his brother.

"Hi," Richie says tentatively.

Mike stares at him like he's an alien for a few seconds before replying with a, "Hi."

The family fell into a long, awkward silence once again until Karen ended it, "Michael, Nancy, why don't you help your brother unpack his things and give him a tour of the house," She turned to Richie and spoke directly to him, "You'll be sleeping in Mike's room with him, he has a bunk bed so I'll let you two decide who gets which bunk." The job of unpacking Richie's things really wouldn't need to take all three of them but it was obvious that Karen wanted to talk to her husband in private so none of the kids said anything. She took her Ted by the arm and led him into the front room, closing the door behind her and leaving the children alone with each other.

"Well you two can do that, I need to study," Nancy told him, already making her way up the staircase to her bedroom.

“Right, *‘study’*,” Mike said sarcastically, rolling his eyes. Nancy just flipped him off as she went out of view of the boys.

They heard Nancy close her bedroom door and Mike turned to Richie, holding out his hand to take Richie’s suitcase for him, “Guess I better show you my room then.”

Once in Mike’s room, he helped his brother by unpacking his clothes and making space for them in his wardrobe, putting them on hangers or folding them away into drawers while Richie unpacked his other possessions. He placed his empty glasses case and spare glasses onto Mike’s set of drawers, various books went into Mike’s bookcase but Richie decided to leave his pack of cigarettes and scrapbook in his backpack (while he left hanging on one of the bedposts of the top bunk.) Speaking of cigarettes, *God did Richie need one*. He hadn’t been able to smoke much over the last two days, knowing that Karen wouldn’t agree with it he had to discreetly smoke in the bathroom of whatever run-down truck stop they were stopping at.

As they worked Richie wondered his way over to Mike’s many awards. They were all for AV Club, *my brothers a nerd*, Richie smiled to himself.

“You like Dark Crystal?” Richie asked his brother, pointing up to his poster.

Mike frowned slightly like he thought Richie might make fun of him for it, “Yeah, it’s a good movie” He said slowly and awkwardly.

Richie beamed at his brother, “Yeah, it’s great! Isn’t it?”

“The puppets are amazing, and music is incredible,” Mike gushed in

an excited voice, visibly relaxing.

Richie nodded enthusiastically along with what his brother was saying, "When it came out I went with my friend Eddie and he couldn't sleep for like, a week afterwards. He blamed me for it like he wasn't the one begging me to go see it for like a full two weeks."

"You know me and my friends played a DnD campaign based on Dark Crystal once, we got Nancy to dress up as Kira," Mike told his brother.

"Really? She doesn't seem like the type to do dress up," Richie said, giggling into his hand.

"Yeah, not anymore but before she used to love dressing up for our games."

Richie smiled brightly, "You play DnD? God, I knew you were a nerd the second I saw you."

Mike immediately went back to frowning, "And?" He questioned defensively.

"And nothing!" Richie exclaimed, "Never played DnD myself but it looks like fun."

Mike let a small smile grace his lips, "You know you could join me and my friend's games, I don't mind teaching you if you don't know the rules."

"Isn't like the rule book thicker than a phone book?" Richie joked.

“Well, no it’s not, but I guess there is a lot of rules.”

Richie gave his brother a genuine smile, “I’d love to play DnD with you and all your nerd friends.”

When the boys were finished unpacking Richie’s stuff, Mike decided to give him a tour of the house. He decided to start on the floor there were already on, pointing out the bathroom directly opposite his own room, Nancy’s next to his and then their parent’s at the end of the hall. He then took them downstairs, showing him the front room and kitchen and then lastly he took him down to the basement.

As they descended the stairs Mike pointed out the round table in the middle of the room, telling his brother how that was where he and his friends played their DnD campaigns.

“Wow, and I thought it was just a stereotype that nerds DnD in their mum’s basement,” Richie giggled.

“Yeah, hah hah very funny,” Mike said, rolling his eyes as he plopped himself down on the ratty looking sofa next to the back wall. Richie sat next to his brother, practically throwing himself down onto it.

“It’s cool down here,” Richie told his brother, “Every other basement I’ve been to has been creepy as hell.”

“Wouldn’t be very fun to play a campaign if it was creepy down here,” Mike said with a smile.

“Wait, no, dude that would actually be so cool!” Richie blurted out, “You could do a horror-themed campaign-” His look of excitement

suddenly twisted into some kind of constipated grimace.

Mike frowned at his brother, confused, but decided not to call him out. "It would be cool," He agreed with his brother.

Richie got quiet and just nodded. Mike hadn't known his brother for long but he was good at reading people and well, Richie hadn't shut up since Mike closed his bedroom door. There was something that was bothering his brother, but he ultimately decided that he didn't know the other boy enough yet to ask him about it. He did make a note of it though, *I'll ask him about it a few days*, Mike decided.

Luckily Karen's voice called through the awkward silence the boys had found themselves in, calling the rest of the family for dinner. They hadn't realised just how long they'd spent just talking to each other.

"This going to be a very painful dinner," Mike told his brother, giving him a sympathetic smile.

"Oh, I just *can't* wait," Richie said sarcastically, letting a smile back on his face and patting his brother on the arm before he trudged back up the basement stairs.

Notes for the Chapter:

i just cant stop myself from putting siouxie and the banshees in this fic. also fun fact: did u know in it 2017 bev has a siouxie poster in her room? i personally headcanon that she got richie into them and that how he knew about them yeehaw

anyway thanks for reading this chapter my dudes,
see u in the next one

5. Polaroids

Notes for the Chapter:

alternative title: memories of when i had my shit together

When the boys reached the dining room they saw that Karen had put on a full spread of food, in an attempt of a welcoming dinner for Richie.

“She never makes this much usually, she just wants to make a good impression,” Mike whispered into his brother's ear.

Richie turned to his brother and gave him a grin, “All this food for little ol’ me?” He said in his southern bell voice, whispering back to Mike. The two boys shared a look of a hidden joke between them and giggled to themselves.

At that moment Karen returned from the kitchen with a large plate of mashed potatoes, placed it down on the table and invited both boys to sit. Mike went to his usual seat on the right side of the table with Richie following him and sitting next to his brother. Nancy then descended the stairs, a textbook in hand and once she sat down opposite her brothers she immediately began reading it instead of engaging in conversation with the rest of her family. Normally Mike really wouldn't care, in fact, would have envied her for coming up with a solution to have to join in with their families awkward conversations but this time it lit a small fire of rage inside his stomach. *Her long-lost brother was here for the first time and she decided she'd rather read the same boring maths textbook that she's read a million times over already instead of talking to Richie?* Mike ground his teeth together, was ready to call her out on it but his father joined them at the table and his moment was lost as his parents then began saying

grace.

Mike reluctantly closed his eyes and hung his head as his mother began speaking.

“Lord, make us truly thankful for these and all other blessings. I ask this-” Karen paused, looking over to Richie who had been uncomfortably staring at the other members of his family, “Richie, honey, what’s wrong?”

“I’ve just- I’ve never done this before,” He confessed, “We never did this before at home so I don’t really know what to do. Only time I’ve ever said grace was at my friend Stan’s house, but his family is Jewish so they say it after the meal, and in Hebrew...”

Karen narrowed her eyes judgmentally but it was obvious that she was trying hard not to look outwardly judgemental, “Right... well, *sweetie*, we say grace in our house here.”

“Right...” Richie said, his voice trailing off at the end. He side-eyed his brother who gave him a sympathetic look and gestured for him to clasp his hands together, close his eyes and hang his head. Richie copied him, somewhat awkwardly, and Karen carried on with her prayer.

“Lord, make us truly thankful for these and all other blessings. I ask this in Jesus Christ's name, *amen*.” Smiling at her family she told them they could (finally) eat now.

Richie immediately dug into his food, he had honestly not eaten much the last few weeks and it was like it was all just catching up with him now.

“So, Richard,” Ted started, hardly even looking up from his food, “Do you like school?”

“I-uh, yeah, I guess it’s okay,” Richie said uncomfortably, *I thought I told him my name is Richie?*

“What subjects do you like?” Karen questioned this time, she in fact, already knew the answer since she had asked him during their car journey from Derry but she asked him again for the sake of conversation.

“Um, I’m good at maths,” He said slowly, “And I guess English is okay.”

“Do you get good grades, son?” Ted asked in his same bored sounding voice.

“Yeah, I’m a straight B student,” Richie laughed awkwardly.

“I suppose B’s are good, but there’s always room for improvement,” Ted responded.

I only just got here and already I'm not enough?

“Right...”

“Oh Ted, don’t say it like that!” Karen chastised her husband, “B’s are great, honey.”

Richie just nodded awkwardly.

The rest of dinner carried on just like that, with Karen and Ted asking awkward, stilted questions as Nancy and Mike gave him increasingly more and more sympathetic smiles. Richie hated it but decided that for now he would just grin and bear it, wanting more and more for the sanctity of his shared bedroom with his brother. It wasn’t completely unbearable though, he knew that they were just trying to get to know him and well, absolutely no one had any kind social knowledge of how to talk to your long-lost son for the first time.

That quiet sense of bearable awkwardness didn’t last forever, unfortunately, “Could you pass me the salt, Mrs. Wheeler?” Richie had asked.

“Of course,” Karen had said, passing the salt to him, “But, don’t you think that Mrs. Wheeler is a bit formal?” She question.

“Oh- uh,” Richie said, not really knowing what to say, “Karen?”

She laughed at that, “No, honey, I mean that possibly you could call me mum.” She said, a small hopeful smile on her lips, seemingly like she hadn’t realised the bombshell she had just dropped.

A quiet settled over the family instantly, no one dared to speak, honestly didn’t know how to reply to something as insensitive as that. Nancy looked up from her book, Mike stared daggers into his mother and Ted for seemingly the first time and a look of something else then boredom. Richie however, was the first one to speak. He balled his hands into fists of rage by his sides, shaking with angry so hard that the table rattled against him.

“What the fuck is *wrong* with you?” He seethed.

“R-Richard!” Karen exclaimed, startled.

“No, seriously, what the fuck is wrong with you?” He repeated, “How dare you ask me to call you ‘mum’. You are no mother to me. You may be my biological mother, *but you’re not my mum*. Maggie was my mum, she’s was the one who loved me, who cared about me, who was there for me. You’re just the women who abandoned me.” By the end he couldn’t help but scream at the women, fury ran through his veins. He stood abruptly from the table and ran his way upstairs, making sure to slam his bedroom door as loudly as he possibly could.

Karen called after him but to no avail. There was no way she would be able to get to him in this state, and she knew it.

“*Great*, look at what you’ve done...” Mike told his mother, his voice cold, low and with a livid tone.

Ted made some attempt at disciplining his son but it didn’t work (it never did anyway), before Mike was storming off himself, going to find his brother.

Karen watched helplessly as both her sons ran from her, tears welling up in her eyes and hanging her head she sobbed into her blouse.

“I hate to agree with Mike, but you *really* messed it up there, mum.”

When Mike reached his bedroom door he almost opened the door on autopilot but then he hears the distinct sounds of Richie crying from the other side of the door. Mike wasn’t the best at comfort and he knew this but he also knew that he had to try for his brother, he wouldn’t let Richie wallow in his sadness and anger alone.

“Hey Richie,” He called out softly, “Can I come in?”

For a few moments no sounds came from the other side of the door other than Richie sniffing. Then suddenly the door cracked open slightly, to reveal Richie, face red and puffy, tears collecting the lens of his glasses and a thick book hugged tightly to his chest. Richie sidestepped, allowing his brother in and then immediately closing the door again once Mike was inside. He moved to sit down on the

bottom bunk and Mike followed him, sitting closely next to him.

“She such a bitch,” Richie said weakly, his voice wavering and obviously trying to stop himself from crying.

“Yeah, she is. She doesn’t understand anyone who isn’t her,” Mike told him, a sad lilt to his voice.

Richie nodded enthusiastically. “Doesn’t get anyone who isn’t fucking perfect like her.”

“And now she’s going to feel so damn sorry for herself because of this,” Mike agreed.

Richie nodded again, a little softer this time and then gestured to the book cradled in his arms. “My friends made me this before I left, the sappy bastards the lot of them,” He said, love in his voice, “Only been two days and I miss them so much.”

“It’ll be okay, it’ll get easier,” Mike said trying to comfort his brother.

“Will it?” Richie said looking his brother in the eye.

Mike put a comforting hand on Richie’s back, rubbing small, gently circles there, “Yeah, it will. I know it will. Last year I-” He started,

unsure of how to tell his brother, “I had a friend, El, and she’s gone away for now- *she’s going to come back!* I just don’t know when, but I know she will.” He confessed. “Anyway, as much as it sucks right now, it gets easier, not great but easier.”

Giving his brother a genuine smile, Richie said, “Yeah, you’re right...”

After a few moments of silence between them, Mike looked over to his brother, “Can I see it, the book?”

“Oh, yeah sure,” Richie said, moved the book in between both their laps, opening up the first page and giving Mike a detailed description of each photograph and inside joke scribbled next to them.

The boys had been looking through the scrapbook and talking for so long that they lost track of time again before they knew it the sun had set and the bedroom was plunged into darkness. They were brought out of it by Lucas’ voice cutting through on Mike’s walkie-talkie.

“Mike? *Mike?* You there? Over.” Lucas called continuously, each time getting more and more frantic.

“Yeah, I’m here. Over.” He told his friend once he had gotten his walkie-talkie from the other side of the room.

“Where are you, dude?” Lucas questioned, “You weren’t at school today and you didn’t tell us.”

“I was-” Mike was about to explain and then remember, *oh yeah, I totally forgot to tell my friends that I have a long lost twin brother! Oops.*

Richie tapped his shoulder, ‘*does he know?*’ he mouthed. Mike shook his head and a wicked grin took over Richie’s face. ‘*Don’t tell him, let’s prank him*’, Richie suggested, Mike didn’t even have to think it over for even a second, he smiled and nodded at his brother.

“Meet me at Mirkwood in twenty minutes, and remember to tell Dustin and Will. I’ll explain everything there.”

Lucas readily agreed, signing off to go get ready.

The two brothers shared that same wicked grin with each other again.

Notes for the Chapter:

ya boi jacob cranking out another chapter in record time.

finally next chapter will introduce lucas, dustin, will and a certain ~mystery~ character (oh the suspense!)

hope u liked it!

Author's Note:

whats up fuckers hoped u liked that.

originally i was gonna have the funeral and richie leaving for hawkins in the same chapter but it was getting a bit long so imma split them up into 2 chapters

also theres a reference to maurice by e.m forster in there and if u spot it ill love u forever

follow me on tumblr [@walkerm0nroe](#) if you so wish
<3